

BOOK REVIEWS – BULLETIN BIBLIOGRAPHIQUE

Juliette J. DAY, *Reading the Liturgy: An Exploration of Texts in Christian Worship* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014) 192 p. ISBN 978-0-5670-6335-9. \$26.99.

In her first monograph, *Reading the Liturgy*, Juliette J. Day offers a very good introduction for those who wish to study liturgy from linguistic and literary perspectives. Day is a lecturer in Church History at the University of Helsinki and Senior Research Fellow in Liturgy at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford. The subtitle of the book, 'An Exploration of Texts in Christian Worship' gives the impression that it deals with a detailed textual analysis or euchological study of liturgical texts. Instead, Day provides a general but scholarly overview of the nature and characteristic elements of printed texts used in worship events.

The purposes of the book are to draw attention to the role of texts in liturgical contexts and worship events and to investigate the functions of their textuality in liturgical acts. Day also examines how the very textuality of liturgical books generates a particular type of meaning-making independent of the ritual context. In eight chapters, the author investigates the different aspects of textuality which are implicit in the production and use of liturgical texts. She applies carefully gathered insights from contemporary literary, linguistic, and philosophical theories to specific historic and modern liturgical texts and scholarship. Instead of looking into the meaning of the text, Day focuses on the textual aspects of liturgical texts, that is, *not what they say but how they say it*.

The first chapter of the book discusses the nature of the liturgical text in relation to its historical development and in light of contemporary philosophical and literary studies. The role of the author of the liturgical text in the liturgical context is examined in the second chapter. Day contends that authorial intention plays a limited role in determining the meaning of a liturgical text. In her view, the reader/worshipper should not be constrained by intentional meaning when making its significance (p. 40). After dealing with textuality and authorship, Day proceeds to argue that in liturgical worship, the truly archaic and therefore traditional feature is genre, not language (p. 54). So in the third chapter, Day joins with John Frow to affirm that a genre conveys more information than that carried by the thematic content. She states that it is necessary to understand the function of liturgical genre to understand the processes of text production and interpretation. The

fourth chapter explores how the different elements of narrative are present in liturgical texts. Here, Day effectively demonstrates this presence through a narrative reading of one of the Eucharistic prayers taken from *Common Worship: Services and Prayers* of the Church of England and used at the feast of Ascension.

In the fifth chapter of her book, the author reflects upon intertextuality of liturgical texts and illustrates with suitable examples of prayers. The analysis of a biblical allusion in a collect taken from *Common Worship* displays Day's skill at establishing the argument (pp. 97-98). She declares that identifying the presence of an intertext by worshipers during prayer would help them to situate it in another narrative which enlightens their self-perception. Day notes that the dominant source text in liturgical texts is the Bible and she fears that the decline of biblical literacy in contemporary worship communities may result in divergence of authorial intention and worshippers' interpretation of the texts. The sixth chapter closely looks at the function of language in liturgical events and in the adoption of specific linguistic features in distinctive contexts of worship. Day also discusses the notion of style in relation to liturgical texts. She points out that the language of liturgical worship will always and necessarily be out of step with contemporary speech patterns and idiomatic use. Nevertheless, she finds these concessions less problematic as long as the criteria of edification, comprehensibility, and participation are not compromised (p. 121).

The seventh chapter unfolds the complexity of liturgical texts loaded with paratextual elements. The role of paratextual elements is explored in an exemplary way in this chapter, noting that the book of *Common Worship* contains a number of features of textbooks and reference books. The last chapter uncovers the thesis of the book. She states that in this book, "another way of approaching the meaning of worship is proposed, which is that the text in the worshippers' hands will reveal meaning through its textuality and that this either disregards or supplements the semantic content and ritual context" (p. 161). Day succeeds in highlighting the function of liturgical texts in worship contexts. The text used in worship has an essential role in facilitating the effects of liturgy such as reconciliation between God and humanity. Day suggests that the term *threshold* best describes the true function of the text. She concludes that liturgical text is a threshold of worship events which permeates and permits the transition of worshippers through them into God's presence. This presence restores the image and likeness of God in them during liturgy.

As the author intends, this book is certain to promote further scholarly and pastoral discussions about liturgical hermeneutics as well as a methodological paradigm for liturgical studies, inspiring students and researchers of liturgy. Liturgical scholars may find this book beneficial since it evokes a new perspective on the function of liturgical texts in worship contexts. In one hundred and sixty five pages, the author provides rich information in rather simple language and clear structure which are even comprehensible to beginners. The bibliographical references and index added to the book aid quick reference and increase the academic quality of the book. This book is easy to read and presents a logical array of arguments, and historical and philosophical insights are carefully used to substantiate the ideas of the author. Day's book invites readers to reflect on the ways they use printed materials in worship and on the significance of these materials in liturgical

participation. Readers may take up the printed text/book during worship with a new approach to the prayer text, being more aware of the language and words used in it.

The real meaning of the liturgical text is extracted primarily in worship contexts, by the actual and repeated participation in worship using the text. Liturgical texts are mere physical objects unless they are used in a worshipping community. This book substantiates that the meaning conveyed through the printed texts of worship events plays a significant role in the full, conscious, and active participation of the worshippers. More to the point, as Day's book reveals, since liturgical texts are *thresholds* of worship, more attention is to be paid in the selection and use of texts for worship.

Maryann Madhavathu

David W. FAGERBERG, *On Liturgical Asceticism* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013) xix-246 p. ISBN 978-0-8132-2117-5. \$29.95.

This monograph is an excellent attempt of the author to present his evolved understanding of the connection between liturgy and theology. David W. Fagerberg, who is proud of being part of "the Schmemmann-Kavanagh school of liturgical theology" (p. ix of preface), continues to elaborate the supposition that liturgy is primary theology and that it is the ontological condition for theology. The title of the book is a grateful tribute to Fr. Aidan Kavanagh, who published a book entitled *On Liturgical Theology* (p. x). Fagerberg's first book, *What Is Liturgical Theology*, published in 1992, had analyzed the connection between liturgy and theology. Later he found that certain misunderstandings about the nature of liturgical theology were caused by overlooking its ascetical dimension. In the present book he tries to remedy this drawback by closely examining the role of asceticism in liturgical theology. The book contains an appendix entitled *A century on Liturgical Asceticism*, which is the embryonic form of this book. Without a doubt, this book is the result of a long journey, and this 'embryonic form' was a decisive moment in the whole process. At the same time it provides a summary of the thoughts elaborated in the book.

Throughout this book, Fagerberg develops Schmemmann's idea that liturgical theology is the reintegration of liturgy, theology, and piety. Instead of piety, the author prefers to use the term asceticism. His main argument is that the asceticism, which is "essential to the Christian life is also essential for understanding liturgy and theology" (p. xiv). The aim of the author is to discover and unfold the theological rationale behind liturgical asceticism. He enunciates that "liturgy without asceticism and theology is a species of ritual studies; asceticism without liturgy and theology is athletic or philosophical training; theology without liturgy and asceticism is an academic discipline in higher education" (p. 10).

The overall argument of the author is logically developed in six chapters without any subdivisions or subheadings inside. This structure makes a slightly slow reading of the book. I would have welcomed a redistribution of the details under different sections in each chapter. The introductory chapter defines liturgical asceticism. In this chapter, Fagerberg builds up a functional definition of liturgy: